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JOINT COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

June 1, 1959

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Clinton P. Anderson, Chairman  
of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy

FROM: Thomas E. Murray, Consultant

SUBJECT: Supplement to Memorandum of May 8, 1959, on "The Present  
United States Ban on Nuclear Testing."

The most recent developments in the negotiations on banning nuclear testing impel me to supplement my memorandum of May 8, 1959 on this same subject. In that memorandum I made the following statement: "From the standpoint of American military security and political advantage, the worst thing that can happen is . . . that Mr. Khrushchev will accept the Macmillan-Eisenhower proposal." This proposal concerns the carrying out on an annual basis of a predetermined number of inspections.

It was originally made by Prime Minister Macmillan in February of this year during his visit to Mr. Khrushchev in Moscow. Mr. Khrushchev evidently saw in it possibilities of advantage to the Soviet Union; consequently he put it forward in his answer to President Eisenhower's letter of April 13. When the President in a further letter of May 5 expressed a willingness to "explore this proposal," Mr. Khrushchev with obvious pleasure replied that the Macmillan proposal is "a good basis" for agreement. He also rejected as unnecessary the conditions which the President had attached.

It is imperative that the fact be recognized that an agreement based on the Macmillan proposal is potentially disastrous for the United States and the free world.

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The essential reason lies in the present state of science in what concerns the possibility of concealing nuclear test explosions. Many of the facts concerning this matter are contained in the still secret document of the President's Science Advisory Committee, known as the Berkner report. This report, together with other studies, makes it clear that there are many ways in which the Macmillan proposal could easily be nullified.

The simple fact is that an accurate detection system for nuclear explosions does not exist. It may come into existence some day, but it does not exist now. In fact, most evidence points to increasing rather than to decreasing difficulty in detecting underground nuclear explosions.

In view of the scientific facts it is clear that U.S. acceptance of the Macmillan proposal would mean the abdication of two cardinal and long-standing American policies: first, the general policy that no agreement is to be made with the Soviet Union unless it is self-enforcing; second, the particular disarmament policy that agreements on nuclear test cessation must be made subject to adequate inspection. The Macmillan type of control would create the illusion of control without the reality. The U.S. would be recklessly trusting the good faith of the Soviet Union, in the face of all the historical evidence that the term "good faith" has no meaning in the Soviet vocabulary.

Almost all the public discussion of the Macmillan proposal has been concerned with the questions of what would be an "adequate" number of inspections, or how the Soviet Union could still use the veto on matters of procedure, instrumentation, or criteria. But my concern with the Macmillan proposal is not primarily related to these matters at all. It strikes at the very heart of the subject--namely, the absence of any system that will detect underground nuclear explosions, no matter how many inspections are permitted. It is this fact which both Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Eisenhower seem so far to have failed to recognize.

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The refusal to take into account our scientific and technical limitations goes beyond the political leaders; it even involves our scientific community. For example, at the "scientific" conference in Geneva last August political pressure for an agreement forced extrapolation from limited data on a single test--a test which, incidentally, was conducted for an entirely different purpose and in which the "possibility of detection" data was an almost accidental byproduct.

The essential lack of an adequate scientific basis for the August agreement was admitted by the President's Science Advisory Committee on January 5, 1959. The corresponding lack of a scientific basis for the Macmillan proposal will be demonstrated if and when existing reports are made public.

The scientific data on nuclear test detection should be made immediately available to the American people. It is not necessary to understand seismology and nuclear physics in order to realize that no reliable detection system exists today. In a democracy sound public policy cannot be formulated unless there is wide knowledge and debate regarding the major issues. The lack of such knowledge and debate has allowed this country to pursue its policy of retreat in disarmament negotiations while at the same time it announces its intention to "stand firm" in defense of the free world.

There seems to have been a serious failure of diplomatic and of scientific liaison between the U.S. and the U.K. The Macmillan proposal appears as a pure piece of politics; from a scientific viewpoint the formula for inspection that it proposes is dangerous to free-world security. The proposal should not have been made in the first instance. After it was made, apparently without prior consultation with the U.S., the Administration should have rejected it. If we

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wish to retain the leadership of the free world, we must not accept the kind of divorce between disarmament policy and scientific fact that the Macmillan proposal illustrates.

The worst thing that could happen, I repeat, is that an agreement be reached on the basis of the Macmillan proposal. The best thing that could happen is that the U.S. should firmly set aside the Macmillan proposal and return to the sound and realistic proposal made by the President to Mr. Khrushchev in his letter of April 13.

This proposal was for a "phased" suspension of tests, with an immediate ban to be placed on atmospheric tests. It is the tests in the atmosphere which produce potentially hazardous radioactive fallout, and it is these tests which can be readily detected by existing techniques. This proposal was most definitely a major step forward in the international control of nuclear tests. It received immediately favorable public support. It constitutes a sound basis for a nuclear policy which will show positive good faith on the part of the United States in disarmament negotiations, and at the same time not constitute an absurd bartering away of U. S. national security for an illusion of international control.

Thomas E. Murray, Consultant  
To The Joint Committee  
On Atomic Energy

Executive Registry
11-5014

THOMAS E. MURRAY  
660 PARK AVENUE  
NEW YORK 21, NEW YORK

June 2, 1959

Honorable Allen W. Dulles  
Central Intelligence Agency  
2430 E Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Allen:

Enclosed is a supplement to my recent memorandum of May 8th on "The Present U. S. Ban on Nuclear Testing." I hope you will find it helpful in assessing this vital subject.

Additional copies of the May 8th memorandum are available if you should need them.

With sincere personal regards,

*Tom*

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE DIRECTOR

Attached is a proposed letter for your signature to Thomas Murray thanking him for his recent letter enclosing some of his written thoughts on the question of detection of underground nuclear explosions. The matter has been reviewed with OSI and they presented no substantive suggestions to include in an answer and, therefore, it is a simple acknowledgment and thank you note.

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JOHN S. WARNER  
Legislative Counsel  
12 June 1959  
(DATE)

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